

Divided We Fall: A look into *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* and how the
Media Creates Reality

Angela Flanagan

Abstract:

This paper focuses on the miniseries, *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* and how this series produces a “new reality” for its current audience that is different from the original media coverage thus giving the media freedom to change what we already know and creating a new public memory.

The day is June 17, 1994. It is around 6: 45 p.m. and the NBA Finals are on television between the New York Knicks and the Houston Rockets. Suddenly, the screen changes to a desolate highway with a singular car speeding down the highway: it is a white bronco going about forty-five miles per hour. 95 million people watch as this lone car carrying two people is being chased by 20 police cars closely behind. The bar that you are in suddenly goes eerily quiet as everyone's eyes are glued to the television wondering, praying that everything ends alright.

June 17, 1994 remains an iconic day; the day that a simple chase down the highway became a “common emotional experience” for the entire country, people "wonder[ed] if O. J. Simpson would commit suicide, escape, be arrested, or engage in some kind of violent confrontation. Whatever might ensue, the shared adventure gave millions of viewers a vested interest, a sense of participation, a feeling of being on the inside of a national drama in the making” (Schuetz & Lilley, 1999, p.23). Suddenly, a white bronco became a turning point for not only the United States, but for a murder trial which famously centers around O.J. Simpson.

When we think of reality television, we typically think about *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *The Real Housewives* series or other drama-filled shows. Viewers get a firsthand glance into the personal lives of these families with little to no privacy at all. With new platforms like Netflix and Hulu, there are ways to watch shows for hours on end without stopping. This new binge-watching idea that comes to television not only allows for viewers to see multiple episodes in a stretch of time, but it also allows for long stretch of time to be condensed into a few hours. A lesser-known subset of reality television can be categorized as infotainment, or informational entertainment. Surfacing in the 1980s, the infotainment industry is a subset of television that is meant to be both information and entertainment at the same time (Demers, 2005, p.143). One show that has bridged its way into the modern day pool of infotainment is

American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson television show. This miniseries centers around the trial of O.J. Simpson and the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. Arguably dubbed “the trial of the century” this television miniseries, according to Jeremy Enger, has redefined the “infotainment” industry into the modern era (Enger, 2016). This paper will focus on both my personal experience with this miniseries and introduce the comparison to other highly televised cases such as the Casey Anthony case and the Amanda Knox case and how this sort of “infotainment” genre is an emerging genre in the media today and the potential issues that could arise with this new genre. I intend to show how this new genre will create a new reality for the public thus changing the public memory of this event. First, I will talk about the case itself and the background to the series. Then, I will discuss how public memory is affected by this new series before I examine the impact this series has on the public as well as this new genre that is emerging. I will also use other examples of cases similar to O.J. Simpson’s trial to show a theme of similar television shows or movies that will help to understand the increasing popularity of this genre.

From the Courtroom to our Television Screens

Before looking into how *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* creates a new reality, being able to binge watch this television show adds to this new idea of watching a trial that lasted about ten months and seeing everything that unfolded and condensing it into ten hours of television. In today’s era of media, binge watching is becoming more popular than watching television each week. With new platforms such as Netflix and Hulu, television shows are available by season instead of waiting each week for a new episode to air. The idea of binge watching branched off of the initial video on demand which became popular from the streaming service Netflix (Jenner, 2014 p.4). While Netflix has soared to new heights including introducing

their own original television shows, the streaming service industry in general has redefined what it means to watch television. In a study done by Mareike Jenner, she argues that binge watching is a new era of television. She focused on Netflix and the release of the fourth season of *Arrested Development*. Jenner focuses around the concept of binge watching and what it means to “binge watch” a television show. Some say it is watching two or three episodes in a row, but “a major factor of binge-watching is that it is disconnected from scheduled television” (Jenner, 2014 p.9). This means that people can watch multiple episodes at once without having to wait a week or more for the next episode. Jenner shows how binge-watching is a new era of television and it is taking the entire world for a whole new spin. Jenner also notes that “increasingly complex narrative structures demand our attention in a way scheduled television rarely can” leading television show creators to create more complex television shows that can show multiple perspectives because “we can schedule [watching television] ourselves” which leads to a shift in what we know as television (Jenner, 2014 p.13). We are able to see multiple perspectives of the same event, and for something as complex as the O.J. Simpson trial, viewers are able to have a deeper view of what really happened during the investigation and the trial.

When presented with the option of creating a miniseries based on Simpson’s trial, show creators Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski immediately jumped on the idea of developing the television series. Stated in an article written by the New York Times, both creators stated that “[They] were like, ‘Oh my God, Johnnie and the L.A.P.D. and the Fuhrman tapes and Marcia and the way she was treated, Kato Kaelin and Faye Resnick ... there’s so much there’” (Enger, 2016). Cuba Gooding Jr. stars as O.J. Simpson with Sarah Paulson as DA Marcia Clark and John Travolta as Robert Shapiro. Even before the series was released, there was some serious promotion to the television series with teaser trailers being released little by little before the big

premiere. Production came together quickly and on February 2, 2016, the first episode aired on FX, thus beginning the 10-episode miniseries.

When the original O.J. Simpson case was circulating around the country, I was not alive, but even to this day, this case, this trial has an enormous impact; not only on the court system and law enforcement officers, but the public as well. I do not remember exactly when I first heard about the O.J. Simpson case, but this case piqued my interest especially when network channels began to produce movies on court cases. I remember my father telling me briefly about the O.J. Simpson case which further fascinated me into researching about it. I always thought court cases were interesting on television because I had this notion in my head that it would be like an episode from *Law & Order*, but after researching about the O.J. Simpson case, I realized that real life cases are just as drama-filled as fictionalized ones, which makes for good television. I began to understand a little bit more why the crime dramas were immensely popular with the public; it had just enough drama to keep people on the edge of their seats but the creators could make it as realistic as possible, which intrigues people even more. This made me wonder why the creators chose the O.J. Simpson case to televise into a miniseries, and after researching it some more, I began to see that other court cases garnering media attention were slowly being turned into either movies or television shows, and since Simpson's case is one of the biggest trials the media has televised, it would make sense that his trial would be made into a television show.

Three examples of highly televised and media scrutinized court cases that I can think of off the top of my head are Casey Anthony, Scott Peterson, and Amanda Knox. I want to mention these three cases because the public has very specific memories of these events, much like O.J. Simpson. Scott Peterson murdered his wife and unborn son in 2002 in California. After being found guilty, he was transferred to San Quentin State Prison where he is currently on death row

(CNN, 2016). In 2008, Casey Anthony was accused of murdering her daughter, Caylee, and after a three-year trial, she was found not guilty much to the outrage and dismay of many people (Grinberg, 2011). For Amanda Knox, she was convicted of murdering her Italian roommate in 2007 before she was sentenced in an Italian prison before being freed after four years due to a discrepancy in the evidence. While the trial itself was televised both in Italy as well as the United States, Knox is also most well-known for the mistreatment of the Italian penal system to her and her then-boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, who was also wrongfully convicted (Morgan, 2011). While all three people have very different stories, they are all similar in the sense that they had the media closely follow their every move during the trial.

All three examples have also had either a television movie or a documentary series created surrounding the trial. While the recreation of these events might be for entertainment purposes, I also think that these movie and television series have something to do with the public's memory and it is either trying to change the public's remembrance of these events or reinforce it. For Peterson, a movie was made called *The Perfect Husband: The Laci Peterson Story* in 2004 before the real trial began. This movie showed the events leading up to Peterson's arrest and the varying viewpoints of Peterson himself, including his own opinion (Young and Erickson, 2004). I don't remember much about this case at all, but I do remember briefly seeing this case on the cover of a magazine, and it focuses on the wife and the unborn child. By adding Peterson's opinion in the movie, they are trying to add a new perspective to the case, one that was not publicized. In 2013, a movie titled *Prosecuting Casey Anthony* was created by Lifetime that was told from the prosecutor's point of view (Werner, Cross, and Ashton, 2013). There was also a special done by CBS News special titled "*48 Hours*" *The Untold Story of Casey Anthony*, which focuses on interviews with her defense attorneys (Klug and Leibowitz, 2009). Again, both

examples are showing different perspectives, but this time with the lawyers and their frame of mind. The same thing was created from Amanda Knox's story as well. Lifetime also developed the movie, *Amanda Knox: Murder on Trial in Italy* which discusses the murder as well as the trial (Dornhelm and Battles, 2011). There was also a documentary that followed the movie that discusses the Italian law and how it differs from the United States. Most recently, Netflix just released a documentary that discusses the entirety of the case, including the two acquittals that have happened since the original trial. I wanted to incorporate these three examples as well as *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* because all four examples are linked together through this infotainment genre, but they also create this branch off of infotainment by bringing past events back into the present and creating this new form of media while trying to add a new perspective to change the public's memory.

Recently, with this new infotainment genre emerging in the media, there has been a surge of miniseries or television movies, particularly with real life court cases. I want to know what is so enticing about this form of entertainment. With Casey Anthony and Amanda Knox in particular, these four cases did not happen that long ago, some people probably remember when the trials were actually occurring; I know I remember Casey Anthony and Amanda Knox's trial. If a person witnessed the actual trial, then why do people want to relive the trial? What makes this for good television? And why bring back these trials now? Is there a new genre that is emerging from the infotainment industry? After watching all of these different examples of real life cases being televised and highly reported by the media, this definitely got me thinking about this new trend happening and I hope to address some issues as to why these forms of entertainment are becoming so popular and how they are changing what we believed to be a reality.

Creating a “New Reality” From a Public Memory

The first question that I asked myself when I was watching this miniseries is what does the public think about this show and more importantly, why is it important? I’ve mentioned numerous times now about “public memory” and this “new reality” that this show creates and I hope to explain why this is so important to the media and for future television. The concept of public memory helps us to better understand how the creators of *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* not only reinforces pivotal points from the trial (like the bronco chase) but also creates a new reality by adding other points of view from people that were not as well-known during the original trial.

Public memory, according to Barbie Zelizer, “refers to recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective” which means that the public interprets iconic moments from any given event and cycles these moments through the public again and again (Zelizer, 1995, p.214). I used this lens because the O.J. Simpson trial has lasting effects not only through our judicial system, but our country as a whole. Different groups remember this trial differently with lasting effects that are even being debated today. Our public remembers this trial in the way the media wanted it to; since the decision to televise this trial is controversial in its own sense, the media has played a huge part in what the public saw and what they did not see. The black community, or people from the NAACP for example, focused on the debate on whether the black community should sympathize with O.J. Simpson, not the admission that Simpson might be guilty (Shipp, 1994 p.41).

In the twenty-first century, media is dominating the way we receive information. The internet, television, radio, even music and newspapers all aim to inform and entertain. In the past few decades, television has been a rising source of news, information, and even entertainment. It

has drastically changed the way we not only receive content, but how we remember certain events. When it comes to public memory, “television is widely regarded as an ideal facilitator of cultural memory with its ritualistic, event-style coverage and capacity for endless repetition” (Anderson, 2001, p. 21). While Anderson’s study focuses on German History, he makes a good point with the overarching theme that television is an important way for the public to remember certain events, historical or not. Television can reach mass amounts of people in a short amount of time, informing millions of people across the country and across the world to inform, but more importantly, to remember. As Tobias Ebbrecht stated, “media have effects on the audience’s images of historical events, and participate in constructing a narrative of collective memory” (Ebbrecht, 2007, p.222).

Being one of the most highly controversial cases in American history, the public memory of this case is shaped by the media and what was presented to them at the time. A big contributor to the public memory is the televised murder trial that has captured the attention of people around the country. Still, twenty-one years later, this case is being brought back to the small screen but it is being exposed to a completely different audience; this audience is a mix of old and new. Viewers might not have been alive when the original trial aired on television, or they just might not have learned much about the case. Regardless, this television show attracts both people who were alive or saw the original trial and those who have not.

When the creators revived the O.J. Simpson trial, the reliance on media coverage and public information became a copy of reality. While the media covered a good portion, there are still perspectives that have been left out that changes the way we view the trial. One example of this bypassing the copy to the original is the portrayal of the prosecutor, Marcia Clark, and her full background story, not what the media portrayed her as. Even though there were perspectives

of the events that were left out, there were still parts of the trial the media heavily sunk into. Since we are lucky enough to have some of the original footage of the trial, there are definitely points that are reinforced into the public's memory as well. An example of this would be the major turning points of the case like the bronco chase or the discovery of the Fuhrman tapes. Since these events were highly talked about, the only representation we have are through the eyes of the media. This is extremely important because it creates a new representation of what we previously had which leads us further away from the "original reality" or what the trial was without the media coverage. All that we have left is what the media presents to us, and that becomes the new representation of our "reality" of the O.J. Simpson case.

Logistically, the miniseries is divided into ten different episodes; each episode marks a significant moment in the case. An example of this would be the second episode that is solely devoted to the wild bronco chase. Just by the titles of the episodes alone, Anderson and Karaszewski have already imprinted what they want emphasized to the viewers, not only about what is going to happen in the episode, but to give a specific timeline to the events that are unravelling. This lends itself to the public memory because it highlights all of the main points that the public remembers. For example, the fifth episode is titled "The Race Card" and it focuses on Johnny Cochran and Christopher Darden fighting over the decision to allow the bias of race to be allowed into the courtroom. In the actual trial, race was indeed a huge issue, and the miniseries supports the notion that racial tensions were heightened during this trial, but all throughout America as well.

For the public memory of the trial, one memory that was prominent then and still prominent today was the racial tension from both the prosecution and the defense. In the beginning of the first episode titled "From the Ashes of Tragedy", riots are seen to be going on

between the African American community and the police (*From the Ashes of Tragedy*). Right in the first few minutes, viewers are already being shown that racial tensions are going to be a huge part of this series. By having actual footage of the Rodney King riots, the creators are already accessing the public memory of tensions that have been brewing in California. It transports the viewer back to 1994, putting a specific mindset into play even before showing a scene of the show itself. Tensions are further intensified when a protester during the white bronco chase scene in the episode titled “The Run of His Life” is shown saying “[The LAPD] is just tearing down another black man” implying that they want to arrest Simpson just because he is black (*The Run of His Life*). In that same episode, more protesters are shown to be saying that “[they’re] not cheering for O.J., [they’re] booing the LAPD” (*The Run of His Life*).

When picking out the lawyers for both the prosecution and the defense, racial tensions are seen once again. In the third episode titled “The Dream Team”, Johnny Cochran, a black lawyer is convinced to help Simpson while Chris Darden, a black lawyer is put as the co-prosecutor (*The Dream Team*). The decision of having two black lawyers, while two extremely good lawyers, on each side was to really emphasize the importance race had to this case. In the fourth episode, both the prosecution and the defense suffer because of racial tensions. On the defense team, Robert Shapiro is shown to be lead attorney even though Cochran is the more logical option because the defense is leaning on tensions between blacks and the LAPD. Eventually, in a silent coup, F. Lee Bailey, Cochran, and Robert Kardashian convince Simpson to remove Shapiro as lead attorney and replace him with Cochran, much to the chagrin and resistance of Shapiro (*100% Not Guilty*). On the prosecution’s side, Clark and Garcetti decide to add Darden to the team, because he is black (*100% Not Guilty*). In the episode, “The Race Card” Chris Darden is put on the prosecution team and goes to question Detective Fuhrman. When he

is done, he tells Clark that he does not trust him due to his racist past. Clark ignores his thoughts, which prompts him to question her why she chose him to be on the prosecution. He bluntly asks her if he's there "because [he's] black" (*The Race Card*). The two lawyers eventually face off in court against each other, bringing the racial tensions not only between blacks and whites, but within the black community as well.

One of the most memorable moments of both the trial and the miniseries is the uncovering of the tapes that contradicts Detective Fuhrman's entire testimony. In the episode "Manna from Heaven", His Honor Lance Ito is in a precarious situation that concerns tapes that hold damning evidence against Detective Fuhrman's previous testimony. When the tapes containing him saying racial slurs and how he mishandled evidence in previous cases are brought to the court to be listened to by the jury, Judge Ito decides to let only two sentences be admissible in court, much to the chagrin of the defense. This move, however, is not received well by the black community, thus creating the bigger problem of racial injustice throughout America (*Manna from Heaven*). Riots begin to form outside the courthouse as well as the surrounding areas, an example being representatives from the NAACP saying that the public deserves to hear the tapes in their entirety (*Manna from Heaven*). As Ron Goldman's father states after Fuhrman's re-testimony, the case has been shifted from his son's murder to Mark Fuhrman's racial bias which is not the reason why they went to court (*Manna from Heaven*).

While racial tensions play out on a public level, the creators bypass the media's original representation of the racial tensions by adding more personal racial problems, specifically for Johnny Cochran and Chris Darden. The public memory of race is supported through the accurate portrayals of the public's reaction to the trial but it is also changed by offering deeper insights to Johnny Cochran, the lead attorney. Publicly, Cochran is taking charge of the racial tensions that

are present and flies out of the starting gate with the notion that the LAPD is racist in his opening statement, severely damaging Darden's opening statement which attempts to convince the jury race played no part in this case (*The Race Card*). Behind closed doors, however, in the fifth episode, Cochran is showed to have his own problems with police; the episode starts out with a flashback with Cochran being pulled over by a cop and he gets frisked and handcuffed in front of his two daughters (*The Race Card*).

One big difference from the original trial and this miniseries is the portrayal of women. There are little to no interactions between two women in the miniseries, but the portrayal of women has shifted to a more positive light in the miniseries, a drastic change from the real trial. From the beginning of the trial, Marcia Clark bases a good part of her case by showing a pattern of escalation of O.J.'s increasingly aggressive behavior towards his wife during their marriage, immediately steering the prosecution away from any indications that race had a part to play in the trial. In the show, it is shown how the 911 calls that Nicole Brown-Simpson made with O.J. Simpson in the background beating her became available to the public, constantly being played on the news (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*). Further emphasis on the domestic violence argument is shown through Denise Brown's testimony. She describes graphically how O.J. has "claimed Nicole as property" seeing her as an object rather than his wife (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*). In the duration of the trial, despite the prosecution's best attempts to keep domestic violence on the forefront of their case, it is swallowed into the waves of racial injustice.

While the role of women is shown throughout the show through the supporting characters of Kris Kardashian, Faye Resnick, and others, it is Marcia Clark who is really given a different spin on her perception from the original trial. In 1995, Clark was heavily scrutinized for her appearance and also portrayed by the media as a "chauvinist" or just as an aggressor in the

courtroom (Rich, 2016). In the series, the sixth episode is solely dedicated to Marcia Clark and both her professional and personal life. Sarah Paulson, the actress who portrays Clark in the show, says that Clark is “a portrait of a working woman struggling in a man’s world that is as poignant as anything you will see” (Rich, 2016).

The first interaction the viewers even get with Marcia Clark at the beginning of the series is her at home with her two children (*From the Ashes of Tragedy*). By introducing her in a domestic setting rather than her in the professional setting, the show creators set the tone that there is more to this lawyer than her professional life. In the sixth episode, viewers get a glimpse into her personal life and see her dealing with the fallout of a messy divorce as well as being a single mother. The sixth episode starts with Clark in court, but in a family court, not the murder trial (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*). The episode highlights Clark’s inner conflict of being a great lawyer and being a great mother. Her two worlds collide when court needs to stay late, but she defiantly says that she need to get home to her children, but it is later shown that it was merely an excuse and her ex-husband Gordon publicly berates her for using their children as an excuse (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*).

There are also examples of how Clark bonds with her colleagues. Being a female lawyer in a very male-populated profession, there are glimpses of her showing her more relaxed side, not the lawyer people are used to watching on television. The sixth episode shows Clark and Darden bonding outside of the courtroom; they are seen drinking together after a long day in court and even dancing together to relax and get their mind off the case for a bit (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*). The media devastates Clark’s image; not only is she disliked by the jury, but the media attacks her every move from her clothing to her haircut to the nude photos of her that were leaked to the press. It is Paulson’s portrayal of Clark, however, that really shifts the

viewpoint from this overly-ambitious lawyer to a woman who is juggling a male-dominated profession and being a single mother at the same time. As Viruet says, it's Paulson's reactions to the different comments thrown at her, "the attempt to keep her voice from wavering, the professional friendship with Darden, the quiet breakdown into a coffee cup, the disbelieving glare at a cashier who rings up her tampons and jokes that the defense is in for a tough week", that really help the viewers empathize with Clark (Viruet, 2016). Paulson is able to subtly show how all of this unexpected fame has added an extra burden to her already combustible personal life. The end of the episode shows the culmination of all the attacks on Clark, as she is shown crying against her office door, exclaiming that she isn't meant to be a public figure like the defense attorneys (*Marcia, Marcia, Marcia*). By understanding her personal life, a little more, Paulson's portrayal of Clark has been written as a "feminist heroine" which is vastly different from the scrutiny Clark received in 1995.

Both of these examples show how this miniseries creates memories that were not shown in the original trial. I personally binge watched this series; waiting until the ten episodes aired completely and then watching it instead of seeing it each week. For me, I did my research about O.J. Simpson before watching the miniseries. I knew that the media treated ADA Clark harshly back in 1995. I also knew that race was an issue as well as Simpson's celebrity status. Being able to watch this show in only a few sittings was almost surreal not only because the trial was condensed from ten months to ten hours, but it felt like I was transported back into 1994-1995 to when the actual trial was happening. This made me think about what the implications are for future television and how this new genre is changing the way we remember past events.

There are new shows every year being produced that deals with real-life cases. Two short examples of this would be Netflix's *Making A Murderer* or HBO's *The Jinx*. While this might be

entertaining and even informative to learn about these cases it makes us question the past. For me, watching the miniseries made me question our judicial system. I am an avid crime show junkie; I love watching *NCIS*, *Law & Order*, I have probably seen or heard of most crime shows, which is also why I became interested in the miniseries. Watching more and more of these shows, I began to wonder how accurate they are. I have done research on the accuracies within a show versus real life, and the difference is astounding. But that is how media is shaping our reality and the public memory. I remember reading *Nancy Drew* when I was a young girl, and I always wanted to be a detective. Television shows glorify the roles of law enforcement officers as well as court officers. So what happens when there is a shift from a highly fictionalized television show to a real life event? A shift begins to form as this new genre starts to show us that these jobs are not what they seem to be.

This new genre can change our perspective about past events completely. Before I watched this miniseries, I thought that Marcia Clark was an inadequate lawyer. Now, after watching this miniseries, I completely take that statement back. My memory of her has completely shifted due to this one show, and I know I am not the only one who thinks this. This genre has the ability to completely erase what we previously thought we know and replace our thoughts with a new and different outlook on the same exact event. It can also reinforce certain events that the media shows to the public, like Simpson trying on the gloves in court.

I think another big implication of shows like this miniseries is the trivialization of the actual crime itself. There is an interesting article from the *LA Times* that states how “the 10-episode FX series practically ignores the horrific crime at the heart of the so-called trial of the century. It treats the double homicide of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman as a piece of pop culture...” which is an interesting criticism of this miniseries (Hill, 2016). This made me

think about not only Goldman and Simpson, but also other victims of crimes. They are essentially forgotten about during the trial; the main focus on the evidence being presented and the testimonies from witnesses. By creating shows like this it almost feels like a fictionalized case instead of a real one which can blur the lines between what is real and what is not. I am interested in how this affects our judicial system but how the media plays a part in our judicial system as well.

It seems to me that the media only presents what is important to the case rather than the case as a whole. While I think the media keeps us informed about these trials, I also think their judgement is impaired. Maybe not in the same way yours or mine could be, but media outlets also need to make money; they need to hit certain numbers in order to continue and a great way of ensuring that is if they report only what they deem is important or worthy of reporting which gives the public a distorted version, thus already creating certain realities that might have multiple sides instead of just one. I think the implications of the media's presence in real life events is extremely important to understand because they give only a certain perspective and that misleads the public into creating a memory that is not fully developed. This new genre hopefully addresses some of the unseen parts which can give a more complete version than the previous one.

Conclusion

When the miniseries was first released, it garnered instant critical acclaim, accumulating twenty-two Emmy nominations and nine Emmy wins. One particular win I would like to point out is Sarah Paulson's win for Lead Actress in a Limited Series for her portrayal of Marcia Clark. Her acceptance speech, while she thanks the cast and crew, she directs her attention to the real Marcia Clark, who was there with her, and says "...I had to recognize that I, along with the

rest of the world, had been superficial and careless in my judgment. And I am glad to be able to stand here today in front of everyone and tell you I'm sorry." (Emmys, 2016). To me, this was the most powerful speech of the entire evening because this show allowed a new perspective that was not readily available in 1995, and for the woman who researched Clark's life the most, to have Paulson say "I'm sorry" on behalf of everyone creates a new memory to be made about Clark, and it allows us as a country to reflect on what else the media could have given less attention to. Though I do believe that Paulson deserves the Emmy win and I think the miniseries was well done, I was more interested in some of the criticisms and what could possibly be wrong with such a popular and well-received show.

One question I ask myself about *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* is how is this show being received? Are people liking this show or do people hate this new spin on television? Whenever a movie or television show is made about a real life event that happened, there will always be people who do not like certain portrayals or certain aspects that were left out or highlighted. I think this genre of media is very specific and needs to be developed and executed properly because the creators have to balance both the facts of the event but also put a twist to it in order to generate a renewed interest. The next anthology focuses on Hurricane Katrina, and I am interested on how the creators will portray a natural disaster and the after effects, which is something in a completely different direction than the O.J. Simpson case. With this genre of television gaining popularity, it would be interesting to see how these shows will create a new memory and a new reality and how each show differs from one another in terms of what aspects are changed and how creators revive old events for a new audience.

One glaring issue that comes to my mind is that virtually everyone knows the ending. The audience members that lived through the original viewing of the trial already know the ending and those who were born after the trial ended can easily look up the ending. While this might not seem like a big deal, I think that has huge implications for many shows that want to pursue this genre, specifically with how to create a show that is fresh but still working around the fact that the ending is spoiled. As I previously mentioned, the creators needed to strike a balance between adhering to the facts of the trial but also bringing a new aspect to the show and to the trial, thus creating the new reality that changes how the public remembers this trial.

Regardless of the feelings surrounding the verdict, the O.J. Simpson case revival comes at a time where the audience is a mix of people who were alive and remember the trial as well as those who are being exposed to it for the first time. The creators of the show had to walk the fine line between telling a story that already has an ending and still make it enjoyable television, because this is a show after all. What the creators do, though, is they rely on the media representation of the trial but they also go one step further and look at other sources to show different perspectives of the same story. As Viruet puts it in his article, “the focus is more on the lawyers, the behind-the-scenes litigations, the racial tensions both in the courtroom and on the streets, and the deep interpersonal connections and conflicts between attorneys” (Viruet, 2016).

This is prevalent because it shows how public memory heavily relies on media, but it is also able to evade the notion that it used just what the media presented; they are able to dig deeper to create a more fruitful story while maintaining its accuracy. Having new sources like Marcia Clark’s memoir as well as the provided media footage allows the miniseries to acknowledge that this trial has a cemented outcome, but there are still twists and turns that are brought to light. Using television as the medium allows the creators to really expand the boundaries on the

media's version of this trial to change the viewpoint and ultimately to change the public's memory of the O.J. Simpson trial. The insinuations with this new genre and how it affects public memory are endless; it can completely change the way we view everything that has happened in the past. The media has a heavy influence on our public memory and it can be changed within one small moment with the proper research and execution, just like with Marcia Clark's story. The O.J. Simpson trial is dubbed "the trial of the century" for a reason. With twists and turns that no one could have predicted and a verdict that is still controversial to this day, one cannot deny that this case has mesmerized America to its core and due to *the American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson*, the country is given new perspectives that will change how we view this case today and the many implications this new emerging genre of television has on the future of television and the public's memory of how we remember certain events.

References

Works Cited

Alexander, Scott, and Larry Karaszewski. "From the Ashes of Tragedy." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX01. Los Angeles, California, 2 Feb. 2016. Television.

Alexander, Scott, and Larry Karaszewski. "The Run of His Life." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX02, Los Angeles, California, 9 Feb. 2016. Television.

Alexander, Scott, and Larry Karaszewski. "Manna from Heaven." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX09, Los Angeles, California, 29 Mar. 2016. Television.

Baker, Houston A., Jr. "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere." Public Culture 7.1 (1994): 3-33. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

Cole, Joe Robert. "The Race Card." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX05, Los Angeles, California, 1 Mar. 2016. Television.

CNN Library. (2016, April 14). Scott Peterson Trial Fast Facts. Retrieved October 12, 2016, from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/15/us/scott-peterson-trial-fast-facts/>

Demers, David. Dictionary of Mass Communication & Media Research: A Guide for Students, Scholars, and Professionals. Spokane, WA: Marquette, 2005. Print.

DeVincentis, D. V. "The Dream Team." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX03, Los Angeles, California, 16 Feb. 2016. Television.

DeVincentis, D. V. "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX06, Los Angeles, California, 8 Mar. 2016. Television.

Dornhelm, R. (Director), & Battles, W. (Writer). (2011). *Amanda Knox: Murder on Trial in Italy* [Motion picture on TV]. USA: Lifetime.

Ebbrecht, Tobias. "History, Public Memory and Media Event." Media History 13.2/3 (2007): 221-234. Communication & Mass Media Complete. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.

Egner, Jeremy. "'The People v. O.J. Simpson' Creators on the Finale, the Kardashians and the Race Card." The New York Times. The New York Times, 06 Apr. 2016. Web. 13 Apr. 2016.

Forbes, Maya, Wallace Wolodarsky, Scott Alexander, and Larry Karaszewski. "100% Not Guilty." American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson. FX. 1WAX04, Los Angeles, California, 23 Feb. 2016. Television.

Grinberg, E. (2011, July 18). Flawed Forensic Evidence Explains Casey Anthony Acquittal, Experts Say. Retrieved October 12, 2016, from <http://www.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/07/15/casey.anthony.forensic.evidence/>

Hill, L. (2016, April 5). 'The People vs. O.J. Simpson' makes fact fiction and finds something profound in the process. Retrieved October 12, 2016, from <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-oj-essay-20160406-story.html>

Klug, R. (Director), & Leibowitz, B. (Writer). (2009, October 17). *Casey Anthony: Judgement Day* [Television broadcast]. In *48 Hours*. Los Angeles, California: CBS News Production.

Jenner, Mareike. "Is This TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-watching." *New Media & Society* 18.2 (2014): 257-73. Sage Journals. Web. 25 Apr. 2016.

Morgan, D. (2011, October 13). Amanda Knox acquitted of murder. Retrieved October 12, 2016, from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/amanda-knox-acquitted-of-murder/>

Rich, Katey. "How Sarah Paulson Is Turning Marcia Clark into a Feminist Hero on American Crime Story." *Vanity Fair*. *Vanity Fair*, 22 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.

Schuetz, Janice E and Lilley, Lin S., 1948- *The O.J. Simpson Trials: Rhetoric, Media, and the Law*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1999.

Shipp, E.R. "OJ and The Black Media." *Columbia Journalism Review* 33.4 (1994): 39-41. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.

Viruet, Pilot. "The People vs. O.J. Simpson Is a Dark, Addictive Character Study." *The Verge*. N.p., 01 Feb. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

Werner, P. (Director), & Cross, A., & Ashton, J. (Writers). (2013). *Prosecuting Casey Anthony* [Motion picture on TV]. USA: Lifetime.

Young, R. (Director), & Erickson, D. (Writer). (2004). *The Perfect Husband: The Laci Peterson Story* [Motion picture on TV]. USA: USA Network.

Zelizer, Barbie. "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12.2 (1995): 214-39. Print.

